



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

A REVIVAL OF THE "KNOW-NOTHING" SPIRIT.

BY THOMAS L. JAMES, FORMERLY POSTMASTER-GENERAL OF THE
UNITED STATES.

THE possible outcome of the anti-Japanese agitation in California may be productive of such grave consequences that the position of the administration relative to it becomes one which to my mind is of the utmost importance. The incident may seem to the casual observer to concern only a small portion of the country, but this is not so. It is a matter that concerns the entire nation. Hence the prompt and decisive action of President Roosevelt has inspired me with profound confidence in the perception and the wisdom which he has displayed. Apparently, he has fully appreciated how critical the situation has really become and has conceived the right way and the right time in which to act.

The attitude of the school authorities of California in insisting that Japanese children shall receive instruction apart from others—that they shall be isolated from other races—illustrates a spirit which is not new in the United States. Some of our citizens can well remember the agitation of fifty years ago, which widely prevailed among us—an agitation against a class of people who to-day are most essential to our progress and prosperity by reason of their numbers and their ability. I need only recall the famine in Ireland in the early fifties. The sending of shiploads of food from America to its starving peasantry was followed by an exodus from the island to these shores. The time, however, seemed especially propitious for the coming of these people. The opening of the Erie Canal had quickened the development of the West, and that was speedily followed by the building of the railroads, so that the demand was great for men who could use the shovel, pick

and the spade. Nearly all of these immigrants obtained employment, and those of us to-day who were then young can remember that the work upon the highways, the excavating and grading for railroads, the digging of trenches through the city streets for the laying of gas and water mains were labors almost exclusively performed by the Irish immigrants. In fact, so truly foreign were many of these people that they spoke, if not the pure Gaelic language, at least a dialect of it. Their conversation with one another as they labored was as unintelligible to an American as is that of the Italian working-men who have, through their great immigration, succeeded the Irish so largely as unskilled laborers.

But with the coming of these immigrants and the frequently improper use of them to political ends, there arose a jealousy on the part of certain people who pretended to see in them danger to native American labor. It is an interesting fact that those who now discriminate against the people of Japan that come to the United States, and who also have discriminated against the Chinese, are employing almost the identical arguments that were used by the enemies of the Irish, even the German, immigrants half a century ago. This hostility became so wide-spread that in Massachusetts even convents were searched to discover the hiding-place of some unhappy Irishman, also to discover documents or anything that would tend to show that this immigration was permanent, and that the immigrants expected to become American citizens. In Pennsylvania, opponents of the foreigner displayed their enmity to such an extent that riots and bloodshed occurred. In New York City, this opposition resulted in the now traditional Astor Place riots, even threatening the life of the renowned English actor, Macready.

The opposition crystallized into that secret political organization, the "Know-nothing" party. In New York State, this party nominated Daniel Ullmann for Governor. Of him it was said that he was born in India, and he was, therefore, nicknamed "The Hindoo." In some States where the movement was triumphant for a time, as in Connecticut, the "Know-nothing" party was at least of indirect influence. It may be needless to say that the agitation reached its climax in 1856, through the nomination of Millard Fillmore and Andrew J. Donaldson for President and Vice-President, the party calling itself "the American party," although it proclaimed the "Know-nothing"

principles, colloquialized into the expression, "Put none but Americans on guard."

I was one of those, and I am proud now to recall the fact, who then opposed this political party and the entire spirit represented by the "Know-nothing" movement, as I felt that this opposition to immigration was in complete violation of the fundamental principle upon which the American Republic is built. I opposed it exactly as I opposed the extension of slavery, and for the same reason. I felt that if we were not able to receive and care for the oppressed of other lands, who sought freedom and an opportunity in the United States, then there was no vitality in the principle of popular sovereignty, and that the expressions in the Declaration of Independence that were afterwards formulated into organic law by the Constitution of the United States were mere empty platitudes. Time showed that the majority of American citizens not merely repudiated the "Know-nothing" party, but reproached it and held its members in contempt.

My views were afterwards confirmed by many experiences, such as the cordial welcome which the United States gave to the first Japanese Embassy that visited this country. The two civilizations met, neither finding anything fundamentally repugnant to it in the other, notwithstanding the extreme racial distinctions which were emphasized by the comparison of this embassy with the men of our own formal gatherings who met and welcomed them.

In the seventies the distinguished American citizen of Chinese birth, Yung Wing, who was in favor with the dynasty and authority of China at that time, persuaded his home Government to make choice of some two hundred young men who were to be sent to the United States, and so educated, not merely in the text-books and in the language of this country, but also in our principles of the science of government, our conception of popular sovereignty and our scientific achievements, that they would be able upon their return to China to make such use of their learning as would be for the welfare of that nation. Yung Wing, himself, was a convincing illustration of the capacity of the Chinaman to accept and to understand American civilization, while at the same time in no sense ignoring or repudiating the traditions and history of the Chinese Empire, or the inevitable relation which it is to bear in the future to the nations of the

world. He was a man of the highest cultivation, of simple dignity, great learning, true courtesy, and a welcome friend at the homes of the great statesmen of this country and of Europe. The personality and achievements of Yung Wing caused those who met him to note the perfect assimilation of the new and the old civilization of which he was an example. The students whom he brought to the United States attended schools at Hartford, at Springfield and at other places. They were graduated at our colleges, as have been many of the young men of Japan.

Some of us can recall the approach of Commodore Perry to Japan; how he, with the guns of his frigates pointed, if not menacingly, at least impressively, towards the shore, brought about communication with the natives, followed by the Treaty which opened Japan to the United States for certain reciprocal trade. And it is a fact that, to-day in Japan, Commodore Perry's is a name surpassed in the veneration and traditional admiration in which it is held only by those of the great heroes of the Empire. Since the visit of that famous American sailor, we know how the Japanese have welcomed the American, establishing American colleges, cultivating trade, tolerant of the missionaries, and striving in every way to maintain friendly relations with us.

We would be false to our principles if we did not earnestly repudiate the disposition manifested by some of the people on the Pacific Slope, which, it seems to me, is no more than the adoption of the abandoned principles of isolation which were maintained in Japan and China for so many years. If these nations can afford and dare to open their gates to Americans, and even welcome them, why should we fear a reciprocity of that sentiment and method? The statement attributed to President Roosevelt, that he will exhaust all the authority which he possesses before he is willing to abandon the solemn obligations expressed in our Treaty with Japan, is this but a twentieth-century echo of the demonstration made by Commodore Perry in Japan at the middle of the past century? If Americans could then applaud with enthusiasm the action of Commodore Perry and give to him such tributes as they have accorded to him for his achievements, why should not Americans now unanimously applaud the determination of President Roosevelt to maintain in the United States, by all the power which he possesses, that which Commodore Perry secured to us in Japan? If the spirit that inspired the "Know-

nothing" movement of half a century ago was so abhorrent to American institutions, then the disposition at this time to revive that spirit, purely for racial reasons, is equally objectionable.

I have always been one of those who believe that, while we should freely receive the foreigner and extend a cordial welcome to people of other lands who wish to throw in their lot with us, we should be careful to discriminate so that we may not become, as it were, the dumping-ground of the slag of humanity. Stringent immigration laws are absolutely necessary, but stringent only as respects the individual, not in any way affecting a man because of his race, his previous condition of servitude, his religious belief or even his lack of religious faith. The Government officers should make careful inspection, so that the victims of disease, in mind or body, the criminal who is not a mere political malefactor, may be refused admittance. But I am utterly opposed to racial distinction or discrimination, and I believe that, in the long run, a policy of that kind, directed against the people of any race or civilization, will lead to national injury, almost inconceivable in its malign consequences.

In a series of visits to England, I have discovered that in that limited monarchy there is actually greater toleration than in the United States towards the immigrant foreigner seeking a new home. Sometimes, when I have made this statement, I have been met with the answer that "England is a little country, and that there is no opportunity for immigration to overrun it." But, in reply to that, we can point to Canada, almost as great in area as the United States, and with boundless possibilities for the future. Yet Canada has never had any fear that there would be such an invasion from the Orient across the Pacific as would endanger the industries, or contaminate the morals, of the Canadians. The laws relative to the immigration of objectionable persons are as stringent in Canada as in the United States; but no group of persons find an intolerant or obstructing hand raised against them when they disembark at a Canadian port, merely because they are of a certain race.

The treatment often accorded to gentlemen, scholars, merchants, who have sought to enter the United States from the Orient is so offensive that we should not be surprised to hear that throughout China there is resentment too, because men held in high esteem in the Empire should have been subjected to igno-

miny and insult, when seeking entrance to the United States, solely because they are citizens of China.

The question, as I have said, is one which, in both a material and a moral sense, affects not merely the Pacific Slope, but the entire United States. We have been for fifty years endeavoring to cultivate friendly relations with these people of the Orient. We have sent our missionaries there. We have obtained great concessions. Statesmanship brought to us the half-way islands of the Pacific; and that strange and unexpected destiny, consequent upon the war with Spain, irresistibly committed to us, though not of our own volition, the Philippine Archipelago. We are to spend two hundred millions or more in the construction of the Panama Canal, whose chief purpose is to make us paramount competitors for the trade of the Pacific. We expect to secure a far broader market for our products in China and Japan. We are dependent on these countries for the greater proportion of our foreign trade across the Pacific. Consequently, there has never been a time when the relations of the United States with these two Empires were more important. The necessity of cordial sentiment between the three nations is of vital import, not only to the merchant and manufacturer, but to the banker, in view of the truly vast trade possibilities which await us with the countries of the Orient which are friendly to us.

The people of the Orient, whatever else they may be, are unsurpassed in their sensitiveness. It is not to be presumed that they will hear that, in any part of the United States, humiliating discrimination is practised, solely because of race, without being disposed thereby to resent it. Their resentments are something to be reckoned with. They inspire a deeper and more continuing feeling than any hope for trade or commercial advancement. If there is conflict, I am persuaded that it will be, in the first case, free from physical violence. If the people of the Pacific Slope feel justified in discriminating against Japanese children, it is inevitable that Japan, by the very power of public opinion, will feel compelled to discriminate against the United States. What that may ultimately lead to, I do not care at present to contemplate; but, as I have intimated, the question is not a local one, it deeply concerns the entire American nation. If it is legally wrong for any State to grant charters that would render legislation in other States null and void, as the United States Supreme

Court declares it to be wrong, it is certainly morally, if not legally, wrong for any State to adopt a policy which tends seriously to impair the friendly relations of the whole United States with a foreign nation. My only knowledge of international law is that which I have gained through a certain period of public service; but it seems to me that no State has a moral, and I doubt if it has a legal, right to adopt restrictive or discriminating legislation respecting a people or race, which is in conflict with the spirit of the fraternal treaty entered into between the United States and the Government of which these people are citizens.

When the people of the East repudiated and condemned the agitation against the European in the last century, their attitude was that of true American citizens. Time has shown how they were justified in their disapproval. But the principles they then upheld are the same on which our progress and prosperity are based to-day. The anti-Oriental movement on the Pacific Coast is directly opposed to these principles. Thus it seems to me that we would be false to our traditions if we did not insist that the wisdom of the mid-years of the last century, which prevailed, is also the wisdom of to-day; so that no race, as a race, is to be proscribed, to be discriminated against or to be humiliated.

THOMAS L. JAMES.